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VARIA SOCRATICA: FIRST SERIES. By A. E. Taylor. St. Andrew's University Publications. Oxford, Parker, 1911. Pp. xii, 269.

Without attempting a discussion, which would not be appropriate here, of the theories propounded in this book, I wish to draw the attention of readers to them, as they are important not merely for the classical scholar or the student of ancient philosophy, but for anyone who is interested in the personality and position of Socrates. The figure of Socrates dominates Greek philosophy; its combination of nobility with homely picturesqueness has a fascination that never dies; nothing that enlarges or greatly changes our conception of the martyr and sage who was one of the forces inspiring Platonism can be indifferent to us. It would therefore be a pity if Prof. Taylor, who attacks all ordinary views about Socrates and contends that the history of Greek philosophy must be re-written, were only read by specialists.

We are accustomed to think of Socrates as above all 'a moralist of the marketplace,' an original character, with a touch of the prophet's madness, who in and out of season practised a system of cross-questioning with the object of clearing up men's ideas about right and wrong conduct. Apart from ethics, we do not usually connect him with any definite philosophical theories; he stands out rather as a stimulus to philosophy in others, and as in this way the chief, if not the only, begetter of Platonism and the Academy. He was tried, as we all know, on a charge of impiety and corruption of the young; yet most of us would be hard put to it to give any precise account of the bearing of these proceedings on his life and doctrines. Over both these matters, his death and the nature of his relation to Platonism, a certain veil of mystery does in fact still hang. The difficulty as to Plato is roughly this. Xenophon (a humdrum but trustworthy writer), Aristotle and Aristophanes (in his burlesque *The Clouds*) combine on the whole to represent Socrates as having indeed in his youth been interested in physics, mathematics, and cosmological speculations, but as confining himself in mature life to ethics and politics; yet his disciple Plato wrote a series of dialogues which dramatically picture him as developing the body of metaphysical doctrine that centers round the famous 'theory of ideas.' Which are we to believe? The ordinary way

of getting over the difficulty is to say that the Socrates of the dialogues is almost all invention,—that it is his own splendid poetry and refined speculations that Plato puts into the mouth of the master. Again, the trial and death of Socrates remain enigmatic in spite of the full accounts of them that are extant. The leaders of the restored democracy were sober men, not extremists; why should they have singled him out as a victim? The charges have an air of being trumped up, and the motives of the prosecution are obscure.

These are real difficulties, and the great merit of Prof. Taylor's book is that it drags them to the light and tries to solve them by bringing them into connection with one another. First, as to the trial. We require, as its real cause, an 'impiety' which shall also be high treason. This Prof. Taylor finds in Socrates's adhesion to Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines, in itself harmless enough, but made dangerous by his personal eminence and the fact that the Pythagoreans were foreigners with anti-democratic tendencies. When we see that Socrates was suspected as the 'able and dangerous head' of an association of foreigners, a semi-mystical brotherhood who hated the democracy and imported religious novelties, his removal as a menace to the state becomes intelligible. His Pythagoreanism, again, gives the clue to the other great puzzle, the question as to the historical value of the Platonic dialogues. Starting from the mystical side of his character, which is admitted, Prof. Taylor argues that the conception of him as merely a moralist is wholly false. The dialogues are not fiction; the teacher whom we see in them combining the two aspects of Pythagoreanism,—the religious ecstasy of the follower of the True Way and the systematic intellectual activity of the mathematician, scientist, and metaphysician,—is a true picture of the actual man. The 'theory of ideas' was familiar to him, as was the whole Platonic apparatus of technical terms connected with the doctrine of things in themselves. He appears "not merely as the continuator of the religious side of Pythagoreanism, the Olympic contest for eternal life against the world, the flesh and the devil, but also as its continuator on the more purely speculative side, as a searcher after the real essences and causes of the world-order" (p. 266).

The theory is startling and revolutionary. To establish it Prof. Taylor manipulates a vast mass of evidence with an erudition which can only be admired, and an ingenuity which, while

it is admired, must sometimes be suspected. Much of Plato's *Apology* has to be interpreted afresh; Xenophon has to be discredited altogether; a greater weight has to be put on the testimony of Aristophanes's *Clouds* than the play will perhaps bear; a crucial passage of Aristotle has to be explained away. Tremendous operations all of them, and opinions will differ as to the extent to which, in attacking them, Prof. Taylor has given us 'truth mixed with error, shade with rays.' Meanwhile there can be no dispute as to the service he has done in showing up the puzzles, too often shirked, that cluster round a subject which is vital for the whole history of philosophy. We are promised a second series of essays on the same theme, and I hope that their appearance will not be long delayed.

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UN ROMANTISME UTILITAIRE: Étude sur le mouvement pragmatiste. Par René Berthelot, membre de l'Académie de Belgique. Le pragmatisme chez Nietzsche et chez Poincaré. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1911. Pp. 416.

In accordance with his interpretation of pragmatism as "un romantisme utilitaire," M. Berthelot seeks various divergent sources for the thought of Nietzsche and Poincaré, and his work is interesting and able as a history of modern thought. The best part of the book is that devoted to the "fragmentary and hesitating" pragmatism of the scientist, where the treatment of the doctrine of probability is particularly good and suggestive. The defense of Euclidean geometry will interest many, although it does not seem conclusive, whilst no reason seems given for the concluding remark (p. 401) that the principles of geometry correspond to an essential moment in the mind's dialectic.

In discussing Nietzsche, M. Berthelot is too interested in seeking 'sources,' although this makes his essay more generally instructive. He tends to agreement with Nietzsche chiefly in his ethical views. Moralists go astray in postulating a system of practical judgments free from contradiction (pp. 180ff): the conflict of moral interests shows that this is absurd. But surely there is no *contradiction* in saying, for example, that  $x$  is good,  $y$  is good, and  $x$  and  $y$  are not both obtainable; yet this is all that M. Berthelot offers as his proof.